



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Influenza Cases Continue to Climb in Utah**

(Salt Lake City, UT) — Surveillance data collected by the Utah Department Health (UDOH) show that reports of influenza-like illness and influenza-associated hospitalizations continue to increase. Also, numbers of patient visits for influenza-like illness are continuing to increase and have now risen above the peak level seen during the 2004-2005 influenza season.

According to statewide influenza surveillance data collected by the Utah Department of Health (UDOH), influenza continues to actively circulate and cause serious illness, especially in those at high risk of complications.

During the past week, 43 influenza-associated hospitalizations were reported to public health. That makes a total of 81 influenza-associated hospitalizations reported so far this year. By comparison, there were a total of 253 influenza-associated hospitalizations reported during the 2004-2005 influenza season, which was considered a mild season.

Hospitalization rates continue to be highest in the very young (less than 1 year of age) and the very old (75 years and older). Additionally, the vast majority of hospitalizations have been associated with Type A influenza. The majority of individuals hospitalized with influenza who were not in a high-risk age groups were high-risk due to a chronic illness such as respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

Influenza causes more severe illness among American children than any other vaccine-preventable disease. The good news is that getting vaccinated and practicing good respiratory etiquette can prevent influenza, both in children and adults. “Your actions can make a difference in preventing the spread of influenza,” said Dr. David Sundwall, Executive Director, UDOH.

Influenza vaccine (flu shots and nasal flu spray) is still available in Utah, but it may be hard to get in some parts of the state. Check with your health care provider and local health department to find vaccine. The following groups are considered high risk and, if they have not already done so, should get an influenza vaccination as soon as possible:

- Children 6 months to 2 years of age
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Persons 2 years to 64 years with chronic medical conditions, such as chronic lung or heart problems
- All women who will be pregnant during influenza season
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities
- Children 6 months to 18 years of age on long-term aspirin therapy
- Health-care workers with direct patient care
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children <6 months of age

“Most of the people who have been hospitalized with influenza have been in one of the high-risk groups for whom we most strongly recommend the vaccine,” said Dr. Robert Rolfs, State Epidemiologist, UDOH. “If you are in one of those high risk groups and have not been vaccinated yet, now is the time to get the vaccine. If you have an infant in the household who is not old enough for the vaccine, then please make sure that the people who have contact with that infant have been vaccinated. The vaccine is your best protection.”

Furthermore, simple steps can prevent the spread of influenza as well as other respiratory illnesses. Staying home when you are sick and using respiratory etiquette are effective ways to limit the spread of influenza. Respiratory etiquette includes frequently washing your hands with soap and warm water, and covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze or cough.

If you think you have influenza (abrupt onset of fever, muscle aches and pains, cough and/or sore throat), you may wish to consult your physician. Prescription antiviral medications can reduce the duration and severity of influenza if taken within two days of when symptoms begin. If you

get influenza, you should rest, drink plenty of liquids, avoid using alcohol and tobacco and take medication to relieve the symptoms. For more severe illness, especially in children and the elderly, consult your physician.

For more information about influenza, go to [www.health.utah.gov/flu](http://www.health.utah.gov/flu) or contact your health care provider or local health department.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*